

Background Information

The following news release was prepared by the Department of Defense to provide service members and their family's information regarding Acinetobacter bacteria and to answer some frequently asked questions:

Acinetobacter bacteria are common in the environment but are rarely a medical threat to healthy, uninjured persons. Acinetobacter can be acquired by person-to-person contact, through contact with contaminated surfaces, or as a result of wounds contaminated with dirt and debris. Some types of Acinetobacter are resistant to antibiotics and can be severe and especially difficult to treat if they result in bloodstream infections. Persons most at risk of difficult-to-treat Acinetobacter infections are those who are very ill, have traumatic wounds, and are treated in intensive care units. Frequent hand washing and disinfection of medical treatment facilities are the best ways to avoid spreading Acinetobacter.

Live **Healthy.**
Live **Happy.**

Naval Medical Center
Portsmouth, Virginia
Infection Control
Department

Here to Help YOU

Contact the NMCP
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Helping People
Understand

Acinetobacter Infections



NMCP
Infection Control Department



Some Answers To Your Questions?

What is Acinetobacter?

Acinetobacter (a-sin-EE-toe-back-ter) is a common type of bacteria found in many places in the environment, including water, soil, and sewage. There are at least 25 different types of Acinetobacter. Acinetobacter baumannii is the particular type that is often associated with hospital-acquired infections. There is no evidence that our adversaries or terrorist are using Acinetobacter as a biological warfare agent.

How do you get Acinetobacter infections?

Wounds can be contaminated with dirt and debris containing Acinetobacter bacteria at the time of injury. Acinetobacter can also spread by person-to-person contact and contact with contaminated surfaces in intensive care units and other healthcare settings.

What types of infections does Acinetobacter cause?

Infections caused by Acinetobacter in the general population are very rare. Acinetobacter can cause pneumonia, skin and wound infections, urinary tract infection, and blood infections. Bloodstream infections caused by Acinetobacter baumannii tend to be the most severe.

What are the symptoms of an Acinetobacter infection?

Symptoms will vary depending on the specific part of the body that is affected. Symptoms of pneumonia, for instance, could include fever, chills, cough, and shortness of breath. A wound infection might cause fever and redness, increasing pain, and pus around the wound. Persons with these symptoms should immediately see their health care providers.

How are Acinetobacter infections treated?

Most types of Acinetobacter are easily treated with common antibiotics and with other supportive care. Other types of Acinetobacter, and especially those acquired in hospitals, can be resistant to many commonly prescribed antibiotics and require special treatments. Health care providers identify treatment options for each infection on an individual basis.

How many severe Acinetobacter infections have affected U.S. Servicemen and women?

As of mid-November 2004, approximately 85 patients who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have been identified with Acinetobacter bloodstream infections. Our military treatment facilities have raised the level of awareness among their staffs to ensure that any new infections are promptly identified and treated.

What is being done to prevent Acinetobacter infection or to ensure early treatment in wounded personnel?

Medical personnel from all branches of the military are working together and with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to identify causes and sources of Acinetobacter infection and to prevent future infections.

Isolation and infection control procedures such as hand washing and wearing of gowns and gloves by those who have contact with infected patients are used to prevent transmission to others in our medical treatment facilities.

Military medical staffs know that the numbers of Acinetobacter infections increase in battlefield situations because of the types of traumatic injuries service members suffer. Because of this, they are paying increased attention to infection control procedures and have been told to watch carefully for early signs of infection.

What precautions should hospital visitors take against Acinetobacter?

Healthy visitors and family members do not need to wear gloves or a gown when visiting unless they are helping with treatments or care that might involve touching body fluids or the wound(s) itself.

ALL VISITORS AND FAMILY SHOULD FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE RULES:

- Wash hands thoroughly before entering and exiting the patient's room.
- Don't go into other patient care areas or rooms.
- It is acceptable to take home clothing from the patient and launder it in the usual way.
- Please, share hugs and kisses with the patient. Make them know you're glad you stopped in to see them and wish them well.

Should people with weakened immune systems visit someone with an Acinetobacter infection?

People with weakened immune systems should consult their health care provider and the hospital's infection control staff before visiting someone with Acinetobacter Or any other serious infection. Such precautions apply especially to people with organ transplants, cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy or radiation therapy, and people with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

What to do when the patient with Acinetobacter infection goes home.

Once the patient is home there is no need to disrupt your normal housing routine. No special precautions for linens, dishes, or personal clothes are necessary. Normal warm or hot water washing of laundry can be done. This germ does not travel through the air. All persons in the household should use good hand washing after using the toilet, preparing food, before eating, or handling any wounds or dressings from the patient.